



## Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council

Minnesota Forests for the Future Phase 8  
Laws of Minnesota 2021 Accomplishment Plan

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### General Information

**Date:** 01/12/2023

**Project Title:** Minnesota Forests for the Future Phase 8

**Funds Recommended:** \$2,971,000

**Legislative Citation:** ML 2021, First Sp. Session, Ch. 1, Art. 1, Sec. 2, subd. 3(b)

**Appropriation Language:** \$2,971,000 the first year is to the commissioner of natural resources to acquire lands in conservation easements and to restore and enhance forests, wetlands, and shoreline habitat through working forest permanent conservation easements under the Minnesota forests for the future program according to Minnesota Statutes, section 84.66. A conservation easement acquired with money appropriated under this paragraph must comply with Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subdivision 13. The accomplishment plan must include an easement monitoring and enforcement plan. Of this amount, up to \$160,000 is for establishing a monitoring and enforcement fund as approved in the accomplishment plan and subject to Minnesota Statutes, section 97A.056, subdivision 17. A list of proposed land acquisitions must be provided as part of the required accomplishment plan. A list of permanent conservation easements must be provided as part of the final report.

### Manager Information

**Manager's Name:** Christine Ostern

**Title:**

**Organization:** MN DNR

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### Location Information

**County Location(s):** Hubbard, St. Louis, Morrison, Cass, Becker, Rice, Crow Wing, Lake, Todd, Otter Tail, Isanti and Cook.

**Eco regions in which work will take place:**

- Northern Forest

- Forest / Prairie Transition
- Metro / Urban
- Southeast Forest
- Prairie

#### **Activity types:**

- Protect in Easement

#### **Priority resources addressed by activity:**

- Wetlands
- Forest
- Habitat

### **Narrative**

#### **Abstract**

The MN Forests for the Future Program will use \$2,971,000 in the Northern, Southeast and Transition Forest sections to protect 1,966 acres of habitat with permanent working forest conservation easements. Phase 8 builds upon past land protection work and focuses on permanently protecting working forests threatened by conversion to non-forest uses. This program will also protect habitat in priority cold-water refuge watersheds by implementing protection strategies identified in local watershed plans. This program protects and provides habitat for wildlife, conserves water, and supports tourism and timber economies.

#### **Design and Scope of Work**

The work proposed in Minnesota Forests for the Future Phase 8 focuses on protection of forest, shoreline and wetland habitat in the northern forest, forest/prairie transition and southeastern forest regions. The program targets forested regions of the state where large blocks of forest are threatened by conversion and parcelization. Forty-four percent of forests in Minnesota, or nearly 7.5 million acres, are privately-owned and at risk of fragmentation or conversion. Since 2008, Minnesota has experienced some of the highest conversion rates in the United States including portions of North Central Minnesota within the Mississippi Headwaters Basin. This program will protect forests through permanent working forest conservation easements. Protecting large blocks of private and public forest will have multiple benefits by conserving critical habitat, maintaining forested land cover essential for water quality and quantity, and by sustaining the legacy of forested lands in Minnesota. The program will focus its work within the Mississippi Headwaters, North Shore and Southeast with the goal of meeting demand of private landowners, building on past work and utilizing strong partnerships in those areas. More specifically, key watershed and landscape focus areas include: the North Shore Highlands, the Pine Moraines and Outwash Plains, the Big Woods and priority Cisco lakes watersheds.

All land protected through working forest conservation easements will protect intact forests and keep them in private ownership. The conservation easements include guidelines that have been developed and implemented for more than 15 years through the Minnesota Forests for the Future Program. A forest management plan is included with the conservation easement. To ensure permanent protection, ongoing stewardship includes annual landowner meetings, on-site monitoring, responding to landowner inquiries, and resolving easement violations.

The program will focus on protection of large blocks of forest land and target those parcels adjacent to land already protected by conservation easements or in public ownership to create even larger complexes of intact forest. This

work is critical to conserving wildlife like fisher and moose who require large, intact forests. These strategies will provide perpetual protection for fish, game and wildlife that inhabit the array of forested landscapes in our state.

Land cover and land use directly impacts the water quality and quantity in our state. By protecting forested lands in key areas, this program will also protect drinking water, recharge aquifers, reduce nutrient and sediment into lakes, rivers, and streams, protect floodplains, and sustain fisheries. Protection of forested land is also critical for local economies including tourism, timber and for outdoor recreation opportunities.

### **How does the plan address habitats that have significant value for wildlife species of greatest conservation need, and/or threatened or endangered species, and list targeted species?**

Targeted habitats of our proposal include: upland conifer forests, upland hardwood forests, non-forested (shrub) wetlands, open peatlands and stream and lake shoreline. Protection of these forest lands and associated habitat will provide critical habitat for key forest game species including upland birds (turkey, woodcock, ruffed grouse, sharp-tailed grouse), white-tail deer, moose, black bear, fisher, pine marten and waterfowl as well as songbird and other non-game wildlife species. Forested and wetland habitat protection will occur in priority conservation areas as identified in several statewide planning efforts such as The Nature Conservancy's Superior Mixed Forest Ecoregional Plan. Specifically, several parcels have been identified that rest within the Pine Moraines and Outwash Plains subsection and the Mille Lacs Uplands subsection. In the Pine Moraines and Outwash Plains ecological subsection, wildlife using this habitat include bald eagles, red-shouldered hawks, gray wolves, sandhill cranes, common loons and eastern hognose snakes.

In the Northern Forest Section, there are over 55 Species in Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) including gray wolf, bald eagle, northern goshawk, red-shouldered hawk, black-throated blue warbler, wood turtle and four-toed salamander that use forest and woodland habitats in this section. In the Forest/Prairie Transition Section, there are over 45 SGCN including the cerulean warbler and least weasel that use forest and woodland habitat in this section. In the Southeast Forest Section, there are over 50 SGCN including the Louisiana waterthrush, wood thrush and numerous species of migratory warblers that use forest and woodland habitats in this section. In total, this proposal supports protection of habitat with significant value for 150 Species in Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN).

### **Describe how the plan uses science-based targeting that leverages or expands corridors and complexes, reduces fragmentation or protects areas identified in the MN County Biological Survey:**

Minnesota Forests for the Future Program uses GIS analysis to expand protection of large habitat blocks and corridors. The tracts of forest land targeted for protection with this program have some, if not all, of the following traits: are currently unprotected inholdings; large tracts that have been identified by the Minnesota County Biological Survey (including identified sites of high quality biodiversity significance); corridors and habitat identified by the State Wildlife Action Plan as significant; presence of rare species and Species in Conservation Need or the habitat that support those species; and are adjacent to other protected land so that complexes can be protected and management improved. In addition we consult with local and regional watershed and landscape planning efforts such as The Nature Conservancy's Multiple Benefit Analysis, DNR's Lake Superior Area Management Plan, PCA's watershed planning efforts, BWSR's and local SWCD's One Watershed One Plan efforts, the MFRC's Southeast Minnesota Landscape Plan, North Central Landscape Plan and Northeast Landscape Plan.

## Which two sections of the Minnesota Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan are most applicable to this project?

- LU10 Support and expand sustainable practices on working forested lands
- LU8 Protect large blocks of forest land

## Which two other plans are addressed in this program?

- Minnesota's Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025
- Outdoor Heritage Fund: A 25 Year Framework

## Which LSOHC section priorities are addressed in this program?

### Forest / Prairie Transition

- Protect, enhance, and restore wild rice wetlands, shallow lakes, wetland/grassland complexes, aspen parklands, and shoreland that provide critical habitat for game and nongame wildlife

### Metro / Urban

- Protect, enhance, and restore remnant native prairie, Big Woods forests, and oak savanna with an emphasis on areas with high biological diversity

### Northern Forest

- Provide access to manage habitat on landlocked public properties or protect forest land from parcelization and fragmentation through fee acquisition, conservation or access easement

## Does this program include leveraged funding?

Yes

### Explain the leverage:

Included in this proposal is leverage from the federal Forest Legacy Program contributed through an annual administrative grant.

## Per MS 97A.056, Subd. 24, Please explain whether the request is supplanting or is a substitution for any previous funding that was not from a legacy fund and was used for the same purpose.

This request would fund new projects that would not be implemented but for the appropriation.

### Non-OHF Appropriations

Year	Source	Amount
2012	The Nature Conservancy	\$1,437,900
2017	US Forest Service	\$40,000
2018	US Forest Service	\$40,000
2019	US Forest Service	\$40,000
2012	Reinvest in Minnesota	\$229,100
2012	State Bonding - Minnesota Forests for the Future	\$231,551
2012	State Bonding - Reforestation	\$80,320
2013	State Bonding - Reforestation	\$187,687
2014	State Bonding - Reforestation	\$54,827

2014	Wild Turkey Federation, Minnesota Deer Hunters	\$10,000
2015	Wild Turkey Federation, Minnesota Deer Hunters	\$10,000
2016	Wild Turkey Federation, Minnesota Deer Hunters	\$10,000

### How will you sustain and/or maintain this work after the Outdoor Heritage Funds are expended?

All land protected through permanent conservation easements will be sustained through set guidelines for conservation easement stewardship that have been developed and implemented for more than 15 years through the Minnesota Forests for the Future Program. Easement stewardship incorporates annual landowner meetings, annual on-site monitoring of all properties, records management, responding to landowner inquiries, tracking ownership changes and addressing and resolving easement violations. Landowners of land in conservation easement are required to obtain and follow a certified Woodland Stewardship Plan. Funding for easement stewardship is included in this proposal.

### Actions to Maintain Project Outcomes

Year	Source of Funds	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Annually/perpetually	OHF - Easement Stewardship Account	Monitor easements annually and enforce easement terms through annual landowner contact and on-site monitoring	Annually review forest management activities and review and regularly update Forest Stewardship Plans	-

### Activity Details

### Requirements

**If funded, this program will meet all applicable criteria set forth in MS 97A.056?**

Yes

**Is the land you plan to acquire (easement) free of any other permanent protection?**

Yes

**Who will manage the easement?**

MN DNR Division of Forestry, Minnesota Forests for the Future Program.

**Who will be the easement holder?**

MN DNR Division of Forestry.

**What is the anticipated number of easements (range is fine) you plan to accomplish with this appropriation?**

6 - 8

### Land Use

**Will there be planting of any crop on OHF land purchased or restored in this program?**

No

**Will the eased land be open for public use?**

No

**Are there currently trails or roads on any of the proposed acquisitions?**

Yes

**Describe the types of trails or roads and the allowable uses:**

Forest access roads and trails have been developed to aid in forest management practices. These roads will be maintained to provide ongoing access for forestry, fisheries and wildlife management activities on the properties.

**Will the trails or roads remain and uses continue to be allowed after OHF acquisition?**

Yes

**How will maintenance and monitoring be accomplished?**

Maintenance of forest access roads and trails will be the responsibility of the private landowner. Monitoring of roads and trails will be conducted as part of the annual easement monitoring of the eased properties. The DNR has a monitoring and reporting plan in place that involves the Divisions of Forestry, Parks and Trails and Enforcement. This includes annual spring (and other wet season) closures, reporting issues and enforcement actions when necessary.

**Will new trails or roads be developed or improved as a result of the OHF acquisition?**

No

**Will the acquired parcels be restored or enhanced within this appropriation?**

No

There proposal does not include any restoration or enhancement.

**Will the land that you acquire (fee or easement) be restored or enhanced within this program's funding and availability?**

No

**Explain how, when, and source of the R/E work:**

This proposal does not include any restoration or enhancement. Any restoration and/or enhancement activities will be the responsibility of the landowner.

**Timeline**

Activity Name	Estimated Completion Date
Acquire working forest conservation easements	June 30, 2024
Develop conservation easement monitoring plans, forest stewardship plans, dedicate easement stewardship	June 30, 2024

**Date of Final Report Submission:** 11/01/2024

**Availability of Appropriation:** Subd. 7. Availability of Appropriation

Money appropriated in this section may not be spent on activities unless they are directly related to and necessary for a specific appropriation and are specified in the accomplishment plan approved by the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council. Money appropriated in this section must not be spent on indirect costs or other institutional overhead charges that are not directly related to and necessary for a specific appropriation. For acquiring real property, the amounts in this section are available until June 30, 2025. Money for restoration or enhancement is available until June 30, 2026. Money for restoration and enhancement of land acquired with an appropriation in this article is available for four years after the acquisition date with a maximum end date of June 30, 2029. If a

project receives at least 15 percent of its funding from federal funds, the time of the appropriation may be extended to equal the availability of federal funding to a maximum of six years if the federal funding was confirmed and included in the original approved draft accomplishment plan. Money appropriated for acquiring land in fee title may be used to restore, enhance, and provide for public use of the land acquired with the appropriation. Public-use facilities must have a minimal impact on habitat in acquired lands.

**Budget**

*Budget reallocations up to 10% do not require an amendment to the Accomplishment Plan.*

**Totals**

Item	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Personnel	\$75,000	\$120,000	-	\$195,000
Contracts	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/ PILT	-	-	-	-
Fee Acquisition w/o PILT	-	-	-	-
Easement Acquisition	\$2,483,000	-	-	\$2,483,000
Easement Stewardship	\$160,000	-	-	\$160,000
Travel	-	-	-	-
Professional Services	\$245,000	-	-	\$245,000
Direct Support Services	\$7,000	-	-	\$7,000
DNR Land Acquisition Costs	-	-	-	-
Capital Equipment	-	-	-	-
Other Equipment/Tools	-	-	-	-
Supplies/Materials	\$1,000	-	-	\$1,000
DNR IDP	-	-	-	-
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$2,971,000</b>	<b>\$120,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$3,091,000</b>

**Personnel**

Position	Annual FTE	Years Working	Funding Request	Antic. Leverage	Leverage Source	Total
Forest Legacy Coordinator	0.25	3.0	\$75,000	\$120,000	US Forest Service	\$195,000

**Amount of Request:** \$2,971,000

**Amount of Leverage:** \$120,000

**Leverage as a percent of the Request:** 4.04%

**DSS + Personnel:** \$82,000

**As a % of the total request:** 2.76%

**Easement Stewardship:** \$160,000

**As a % of the Easement Acquisition:** 6.44%

**How will this program accommodate the reduced appropriation recommendation from the original proposed requested amount?**

A combination of review of conservation value, professional best judgment and input from landowners was used to reduce originally proposed request to fit with the current recommendation.

**Describe and explain leverage source and confirmation of funds:**

The federal contribution is an on-going annual administrative grant received by the Division of Forestry, Forest Legacy/Minnesota Forests for the Future Program.



## Personnel

**Has funding for these positions been requested in the past?**

Yes

**Please explain the overlap of past and future staffing and position levels previously received and how that is coordinated over multiple years?**

There has been a gap between funding and a reduction in staff, therefore there has not been any overlap.

## Easement Stewardship

**What is the number of easements anticipated, cost per easement for stewardship, and explain how that amount is calculated?**

There are 6-8 easements anticipated. The DNR easement stewardship calculator is used with an average of \$20,000 - \$25,000 per easement.

## Direct Support Services

**How did you determine which portions of the Direct Support Services of your shared support services is direct to this program?**

DNR Direct and Necessary Cost Calculator - subtractive model.

## Federal Funds

**Do you anticipate federal funds as a match for this program?**

Yes

**Are the funds confirmed?**

No

**What is the approximate date you anticipate receiving confirmation of the federal funds?**

The funds are confirmed annually; approximately in August of each year.

Output Tables**Acres by Resource Type (Table 1)**

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Acres
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	1,966	-	1,966
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	-	-	<b>1,966</b>	-	<b>1,966</b>

**Total Requested Funding by Resource Type (Table 2)**

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	\$2,971,000	-	\$2,971,000
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	-	-	<b>\$2,971,000</b>	-	<b>\$2,971,000</b>

**Acres within each Ecological Section (Table 3)**

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Acres
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	0	-	16	-	1,950	1,966
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	-	<b>16</b>	-	<b>1,950</b>	<b>1,966</b>

**Total Requested Funding within each Ecological Section (Table 4)**

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest	Total Funding
Restore	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	\$140,000	-	\$2,831,000	\$2,971,000
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	-	-	<b>\$140,000</b>	-	<b>\$2,831,000</b>	<b>\$2,971,000</b>

**Average Cost per Acre by Resource Type (Table 5)**

Type	Wetland	Prairie	Forest	Habitat
Restore	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	\$1,511	-
Enhance	-	-	-	-

**Average Cost per Acre by Ecological Section (Table 6)**

Type	Metro/Urban	Forest/Prairie	SE Forest	Prairie	N. Forest
Restore	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Fee with State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-

Protect in Fee w/o State PILT Liability	-	-	-	-	-
Protect in Easement	-	-	\$8,750	-	\$1,451
Enhance	-	-	-	-	-

### Target Lake/Stream/River Feet or Miles

1 mile

## Outcomes

### Programs in forest-prairie transition region:

- Rivers and streams provide corridors of habitat including intact areas of forest cover in the east and large wetland/upland complexes in the west ~ *These projects will permanently protect areas of the forest-prairie transition region providing biologically diverse wildlife habitat for desirable game species and endangered, threatened, special concern species and species of greatest conservation need. This will provide multiple conservation benefits to help mitigate the effects of climate change, invasive species and other major stressors. Forest protection activities will be assessed, management planning required and documented, and properties monitored. Forest composition will be inventoried. Wildlife populations will be monitored.*

### Programs in metropolitan urbanizing region:

- Core areas protected with highly biologically diverse wetlands and plant communities, including native prairie, Big Woods, and oak savanna ~ *These projects will build upon past projects and adjacent protected properties to permanently protect larger areas of the Big Woods remnants; providing biologically diverse habitat and providing multiple conservation benefits. Forest protection activities will be assessed, management planning required and documented and properties monitored. Forest composition will be inventoried. Wildlife populations will be monitored.*

### Programs in the northern forest region:

- Forestlands are protected from development and fragmentation ~ *These projects will permanently protect 1,950 acres of Northern forests to provide biologically diverse wildlife habitat for desirable game species and endangered, threatened, special concern species and species of greatest conservation need. This will provide multiple conservation benefits to help mitigate the effects of climate change, invasive species and other major stressors. Forest protection activities will be assessed, management planning required and documented, and properties monitored. Forest composition will be inventoried. Wildlife populations will be monitored.*

## Parcels

*For restoration and enhancement programs ONLY: Managers may add, delete, and substitute projects on this parcel list based upon need, readiness, cost, opportunity, and/or urgency so long as the substitute parcel/project forwards the constitutional objectives of this program in the Project Scope table of this accomplishment plan. The final accomplishment plan report will include the final parcel list.*

### Parcel Information

#### Sign-up Criteria?

No

#### Explain the process used to identify, prioritize, and select the parcels on your list:

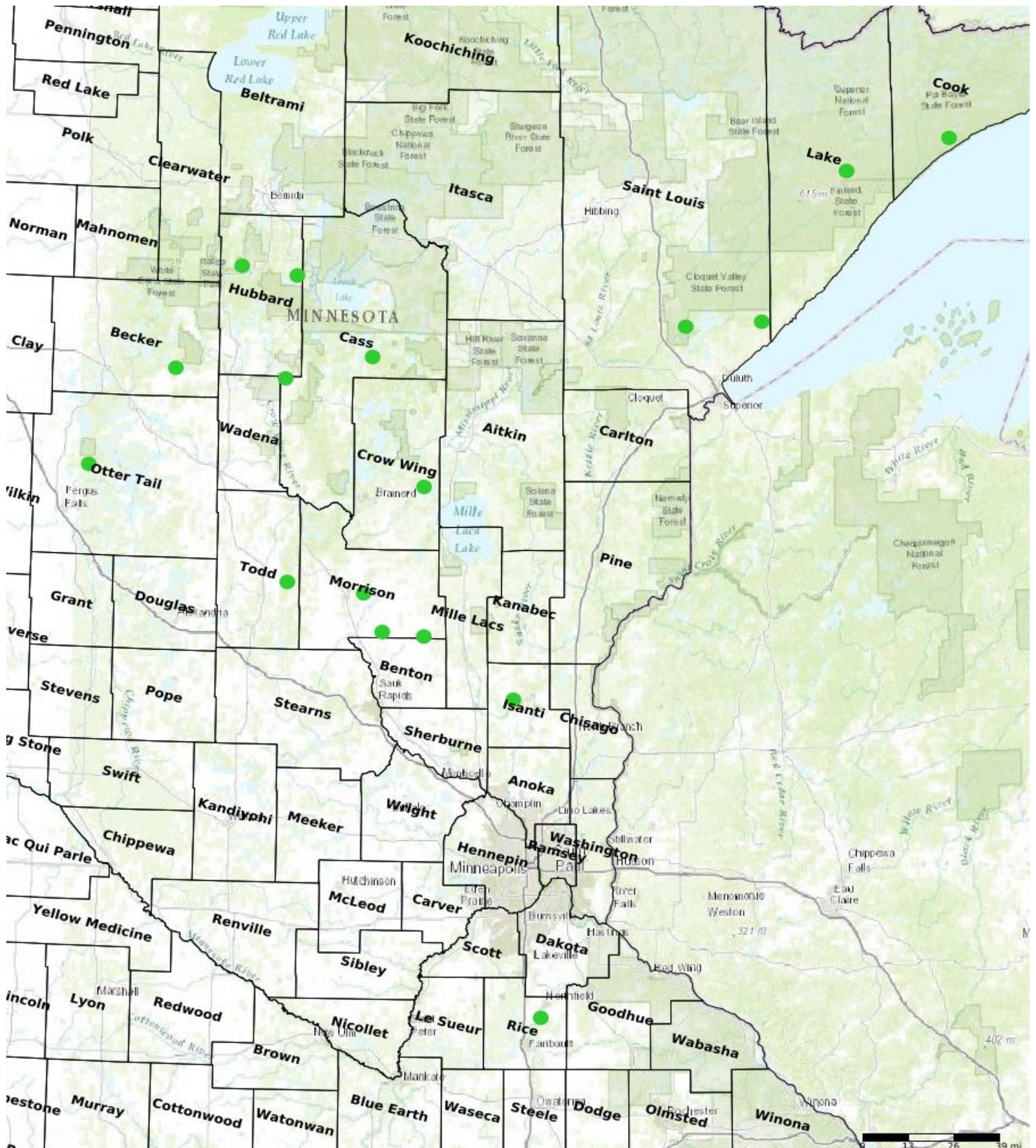
Applications to the Minnesota Forests for the Future Program are made by interested willing landowners. Minnesota Forests for the Future Program uses GIS analysis to expand protection of large habitat blocks and corridors. The tracts of forest land targeted for protection with this program have some, if not all, of the following traits: are currently unprotected inholdings; large tracts that have been identified by the Minnesota County Biological Survey (including identified sites of high quality biodiversity significance); corridors and habitat identified by the State Wildlife Action Plan as significant; presence of rare species and Species in Conservation Need or the habitat that support those species; adjacent to protected land in order to build complexes and improve management. In addition we consult with local and regional watershed and landscape planning efforts such as The Nature Conservancy's Multiple Benefit Analysis, DNR's Lake Superior Area Management Plan, PCA's watershed planning efforts, BWSR's and local SWCD's One Watershed One Plan efforts, the MFRC's Southeast Minnesota Landscape Plan, North Central Landscape Plan and Northeast Landscape Plan.

### Protect Parcels

Name	County	TRDS	Acres	Est Cost	Existing Protection
Wolf Lake	Becker	13938225	160	\$130,000	No
Cass Tract 2	Cass	13832205	180	\$100,000	No
Scherping	Cass	13928204	480	\$0	No
Lake Agnes - Mundell	Cook	06003211	22	\$0	No
Clearwater Phase 2	Crow Wing	04528208	80	\$809,000	No
Dietz Timberlands	Hubbard	14334207	590	-	No
Shingobee Lake	Hubbard	14332223	500	\$750,000	No
Springvale - Springborn	Isanti	03624220	45	\$0	No
TFG	Lake	05908223	780	\$390,000	No
Rice Club	Morrison	03931225	200	\$180,000	No
Mutt's Hill	Morrison	04131233	460	\$0	No
Morrison Tract 2	Morrison	03929236	50	\$51,000	No
Maplewood - Swanson	Otter Tail	13442202	160	\$0	No
Rice Tract 1	Rice	11120226	16	\$70,000	No
Clover Valley 1 - Johnson	St. Louis	05212203	400	\$0	No
Bergen Lake - Halvorson	St. Louis	05216212	65	\$0	No
Little Elk Forest 1 - Gray	Todd	13032233	300	\$0	No



## Parcel Map



- Protect in Easement
- ▲ Protect in Fee with PILT
- Protect in Fee W/O PILT
- ★ Restore
- ✕ Enhance
- ⊕ Other